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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR HILL DISCUSSES SECURITY, DETAINEES, AND
MEK WITH ICRC

REF: A. BAGHDAD 377

[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 797

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Robert S. Ford for reason 1.4 (b)
) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: In a November 10 meeting between the Ambassador and ICRC Head of Iraq Delegation Juan Pedro Schaerer, the latter provided an overview of the ICRC's activities related to detainees and the MEK, and introduced his replacement, Magne Barth. Schaerer praised the close cooperation between the organization and Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I), and thanked the Embassy for its support. He also announced the ICRC's plans to relocate its regional headquarters in the region from Amman to Baghdad and shared his views on current security conditions across Iraq with the Ambassador. End summary.

ICRC CONCERNS ABOUT GOI TREATMENT OF DETAINEES, MEK

[1](#)2. (C) ICRC head Juan Pedro Schaerer relayed his observations from a visit the preceding day to Taji, where the ICRC delegation noted that of the 4,000 individuals detained there, only 1,000 had been charged under Iraqi law. He expressed his concerns that the challenges of charging the remaining 3,000 individuals in the next two months would likely exceed the capacity of Iraqi authorities. He added that the ICRC has no legal basis for intervening since the individuals must be interned under Iraqi law, but that the ICRC is currently working to determine what type of recommendation it can make to Iraqi authorities to remedy the situation. Schaerer also communicated hesitation about the GOI's ability to bear the operating costs of maintaining Taji, which amount to an estimated USD6 million per month.

[1](#)3. (C) The ICRC delegation to Iraq passed copies of a report on the conditions of individuals detained by MNF-I since January 1, 2009 to the Ambassador and to MNF-I, mentioning that the ICRC met with 150 detainees at Cropper and Taji to assess whether they were given access to lawyers and detained under predetermined procedures. Schaerer intimated to the Ambassador that the findings of the report were less than desirable, and conveyed the ICRC's recommendation that U.S. authorities continue mentoring Iraqi authorities to make sure judicial guarantees are protected. Despite the suboptimal findings of the ICRC report, Schaerer lauded the decrease in total detainee numbers, stating that between Taji and Cropper, there has been a decline from 16,000 to 7,000 detainees since the beginning of the year.

[1](#)4. (C) Schaerer expressed the ICRC's concerns about the GOI's intended approach to moving MEK residents, and the possibility that the GOI might need to use force to move these individuals. He announced that the ICRC delegation intends to meet with officers in Iraqi PM Maliki's office to discuss these issues and recent MEK-related developments in the coming days.

THE FUTURE OF THE ICRC AND VIEWS ON SECURITY

15. (C) Following a successful August 4 Technical Subcommittee meeting in Kuwait, the GOI petitioned the ICRC, which oversees the process, to hold the November Tripartite Committee in Baghdad. Schaerer mentioned that due to resistance from Saudi Arabian stakeholders involved in the decision, the ICRC opted to hold the meeting, which is scheduled for next week, in Kuwait. He added that the ICRC Iraq delegation's participation in the meeting will mark the beginning of his transition to his replacement, Magne Barth, who will assume leadership at the end of November. Barth added that, thanks to Schaerer's strong leadership efforts, the ICRC is poised to begin its transition from Amman to a permanent base in Baghdad, and expects the relocation to be complete by the end of 2010.

16. (C) In response to a question about the ICRC's view of current security conditions across Iraq, ICRC Head Juan Pedro Schaerer noted that in the southern part of the country police and Iraqi forces have security concerns under control. The ICRC feels comfortable operating there. In contrast, the ICRC is closely watching Iraq's disputed territories in anticipation of a possible decline in security and stability. Schaerer offered that in his view, the security outlook in Baghdad remains in question, and that the ICRC is monitoring conditions to determine whether international organizations become increasingly attractive targets for terrorists.

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Incoming ICRC Head Magne Barth added that the ICRC's strategy is to keep a low profile through elections, play no role in political issues, and focus on training and transferring expertise to Iraqi authorities. Ambassador Hill agreed that the high profile explosions that have devastated GOI ministries in recent months have spurred speculation and a level of uncertainty about what buildings may become ripe targets in the future. The Ambassador expressed hope that the overall trend of decreasing violence in Iraq portends a greater level of safety for all.

HILL